

Communal, Shared Spaces & Balcony Safety Policy

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1. Our policy statement

- 1.1. Sage Homes is committed to making sure your neighbourhood is tidy, safe, and a community to be proud of. We are responsible for meeting our legal requirements in making sure that all shared spaces/facilities are clean, safe, well maintained, and clear of any potential risks.
- 1.2. Sensible use of shared spaces is important for the safety and enjoyment of all customers that live in the community. This includes making sure that all shared spaces areas (including hallways, landlord service cupboards, bin stores, cycle stores, stairwells, entrances and exists, car parks and open grassed areas) are kept free of any personal items which may be a fire or trip hazard. This also includes the correct use of balconies which form a part of blocks of flats and maisonettes.
- 1.3. Your tenancy or lease agreement require the correct disposal of rubbish and storage of personal items to make sure your shared spaces are clean and safe. Shared spaced, even those immediately adjacent to a customers property, are not an extension of an individual's property, as such customers should not use these areas for their personal effects or have exclusive use particularly where access to shared spaced is required by customers, visitors and colleagues.
- 1.4. Our teams and contractors will check on the safety of our neighbourhoods by carrying out health and safety checks, and risk assessments as defined in our Fire Risk Assessment Policy. Under our See it, Sage it, Sorted campaign, all customers, colleagues and contractors working on behalf of Sage have a duty to report concerns with communal and shared spaces.
- 1.5. To avoid any safety risks and unsightly clutter, including bin and cycle stores, we take a zero-tolerance approach to the storage of items and any items found will be removed.
- 1.6. Storing items in communal areas is a breach of your tenancy agreement. Enforcement action will be considered to address a persistent or serious breach of tenancy.
- 1.7. Where personal belongings are found, Sage Homes will usually seek to identify the owner and provide notice that the item must be removed. In most circumstances, a tort notice or warning sticker will be applied to the item before any removal action is taken, allowing the owner a reasonable opportunity to recover their belongings. However, where an item presents an immediate risk to health and safety, compromises fire safety, obstructs access or escape routes, or otherwise places customers, visitors, or colleagues at risk, Sage Homes reserves the right to remove and dispose of the item without notice. This is necessary to protect the safety of others and maintain safe communal areas.
- 1.8. We will make every effort to contact customers to give them an opportunity to remove their own items, however if this is not done in a timely manner (seven days), or the item poses a health and safety risk, we will remove any items immediately.
- 1.9. Where Sage Homes removes items from communal spaces, we will not routinely store or retain them. Items removed in breach of this policy will be disposed of. Customers should therefore ensure that valuable or essential belongings, including bicycles, e-bikes, scooters, prams, buggies, and other personal possessions, are not stored in communal areas, hallways, cycle stores, stairwells, entrances, or any other shared spaces.

Sage Homes recognises that replacing personal belongings can create a financial burden for customers, and we do not want customers to incur unnecessary costs as a result of

enforcement action. For this reason, our preference is always to work with customers to remove items voluntarily wherever possible. However, the safety of customers, visitors, and colleagues must take priority. Where items are left in shared spaces in breach of this policy, particularly where they create a fire risk, obstruction, or other safety concern, they will be removed and will not be returned. Customers are therefore strongly encouraged to store all personal belongings within their own property or in any designated storage areas provided for that purpose.

1.10. Sage Homes operates a zero-tolerance approach to items that create a fire, health and safety, or security risk within shared spaces. Any item identified as posing an immediate risk, including items that could cause an explosion, significantly contribute to the spread of fire, obstruct emergency escape routes, or endanger others, will be removed without notice. This includes all e-bikes, e-scooters and their batteries when stored or charged in communal areas, due to the serious fire risks associated with lithium-ion batteries. Immediate action will be taken where necessary to protect customers, visitors, colleagues and the wider building.

1.11. Balconies

1.12. Balconies must not be used as a storage area. Customers should only keep reasonable quantities of outdoor furniture, plants and other low-risk items on their balcony. Excessive storage can increase the available fuel load in the event of a fire and may hinder emergency response. Sage Homes may require customers to reduce the number of items stored on a balcony where we believe there is an increased fire, safety or building management risk.

1.13. The use of barbecues, fire pits, patio heaters and any appliance or equipment involving a naked flame is prohibited on balconies. Customers must not store or use gas cylinders, charcoal, petrol, fuels, fireworks or other flammable substances on balconies. These items present a significant risk not only to the individual property but also to neighbouring homes and the wider building. Customers must not store, charge or use e-bikes, e-scooters, mobility devices or lithium-ion batteries on balconies.

1.14. Balconies must not be altered or enclosed without the prior written permission of Sage Homes and any other party whose consent may be required. This includes the installation of screening, decking, sheds, cupboards, fixed storage units, artificial walls or other structures. Unauthorised alterations may affect fire safety, building maintenance requirements and the external appearance of the building.

1.15. Customers must not place items on balcony ledges, railings or external walls, or allow any item to project beyond the balcony boundary. Items must be stored safely and securely to prevent them from falling, being blown from the balcony, or causing injury or damage to

1.16. Where balconies are visible from communal areas or neighbouring properties, customers are expected to maintain them in a clean and tidy condition. Accumulated waste, rubbish bags, abandoned items, construction materials or other inappropriate storage may be removed in accordance with this policy and may result in tenancy enforcement action where concerns impact others or the safety of the building.

1.17. Third-Party Managed Areas

1.18. 1.16 For some homes, shared spaces and communal areas may be owned, managed, or maintained by a third party, such as a managing agent, management company, local authority, or another landlord. These organisations may have their own estate management, fire safety, waste management, and storage requirements which customers must comply with in addition to the terms of their tenancy or lease

agreement.

- 1.19. 1.17 Where Sage Homes becomes aware of items, behaviour, or activities that breach these requirements, we will notify customers and may require corrective action to be taken. We will also work with the relevant managing organisation where necessary to help ensure shared spaces remain safe, accessible, and well maintained.
- 1.20. 1.18 We will also work with third party organisations to ensure that they are maintaining these spaces well. Customers can report concerns directly to Sage Homes and we will escalate the matters to the correct organisation.

2. The scope of this policy

- 2.1. This policy applies to the safe management of common areas of all properties Sage Homes are responsible for.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all of Sage's customers including all tenants, shared owners and leaseholders and considers shared spaces managed by third party organisations and landlords.
- 2.3. This policy has been developed in line with the following acts and standards:
- The Regulator of Social Housing Neighbourhood and Community Standard
 - Housing Act 2004
 - Occupiers Liability Act 1957
 - The Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977.

3. Delivery of this policy

- 3.1. This policy should be read alongside:
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| • Antisocial Behaviour Policy | • Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 |
| • Fire Safety Policy | • The Housing Act 2004 |
| • Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 | • Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977. |
- 3.2. The effective delivery of this policy including training, guidance and support required by colleagues for implementation of this policy will be provided by the Homes and Communities Team.

4. Equality and diversity

- 4.1. Sage is committed to making sure all services are accessible to all our customers. Our staff will be trained to make sure they are communicating appropriately with our customers, and they have the relevant information.
- 4.2. This policy will be applied in a way which makes sure we treat all customers with fairness and respect. We recognise our duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination or victimisation on the grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender re-assignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership and any other defined within the Equality Act 2010.
- 4.3. On request we will provide translations of all our documents, policies and procedures

in various languages and formats including braille and large print.

5. Policy review

5.1 We will review this policy at least every three years to make sure it remains relevant and accurate unless:

- Legislation/regulation or industry changes require otherwise, making sure that it continues to meet our aims and industry best practice.
- We identify any problems or failures in this policy as a result of stakeholder and customer feedback, complaints, or findings from any independent organisations.

Version	Checked by	Amendments	Approved at/by	Date of Approval	Published by	Date of Review
1.5	Head of Field Services and Housing Management Litigation Solicitor	Project Thyme (self-management) procedural review	Head of Field Services	Nov 23	Office Management	Nov 26
1.6	Regional Housing Managers	Third Party Management, Balcony update and in line with Consumer Standard requirements	Head of Housing	Jul 2026		Jul 2029